(c) if so, what is the strength at present and the steps taken to procure the required number of aircrafts?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) While varying projections have been made with regard to growth of civil aviation sector, the domestic and international passenger traffic grew at 46% and 16% during 2006 and Scheduled domestic passenger airlines are operating 312 aircraft.

(b) and (c) As per traffic data available, the average per day passenger embarked at Indian airports are 151407. The growth of civil aviation sector in the coming years *inter-alia* will depend upon on GDP growth, foreign tourist arrivals and domestic tourism. Induction of aircrafts will, therefore, be commensurate with the growth in passenger traffic in the coming years.

Hijack threat by terrorists

†2266. SHRI BALAVANT *ALIAS* BAL APTE:
SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS:
SHRI VINAY KATIYAR:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that terrorists have threatened to hijack aeroplanes;

(b) if so, the details of such information received by Government;

(c) whether any special action plan has been prepared by Government for the security of the aeroplanes flying out of the country; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Intelligence inputs regarding various security threats including hijack threats are received from Intelligence agencies on several occasions. Besides, sometimes anonymous hijack threat messages are also received.

(c) Yes, Sir.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(d) Based on the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) security manual, there is a National Civil Aviation Security Programme at the national level. At the airport level, each airport has an Airport Security Programme and Contingency Plan on handling aircraft hijack situation. As per the existing guidelines various security procedures like pre-embarkation security check of passengers and baggages, enforcement of access control at airport and to the aircraft, Anti-sabotage check of the aircraft etc. are adhered to by the security agencies for security of all aircrafts flying out.

Merger of Indian and Air India

2267. SHRI SHANTARAM LAXMAN NAIK:
SHRI SYED AZEEZ PASHA:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the much talked-about merger of Indian and Air India has taken place;

(b) if so, the essential features of the agreement;

(c) the benefits, if any, that passengers travelling by the air services of the two companies are going to derive;

(d) whether employees have agreed to the merger; and

(e) the details referring to the safeguard of employees, stipulated, if any, in the agreement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) The Government has decided to merge Air India and Indian Airlines into a new company in a phased manner over the next two years. The technical and procedural formalities for merging the two airlines have begun and one company with one name, brand and logo is expected to be in place within the coming 16 weeks. The new company will have a large aircrafts fleet, with both international and domestic footprint, setting fresh benchmarks for efficiency and reliability. It is estimated that the merger would result in net benefit of Rs. 600 crores at the end of third year of merger.